

magonia

Number 36, May 1990

In this issue

**NEW AGE,
SAME OLD STORY**
Roger Sandell

**SPONTANEOUS
COMBUSTION**
A Nineteenth
Century View

DELUSIONS
Manfred Cassirer

ABDUCTIONS
Who's being taken
for a ride?
John Rimmer

Northern Echoes
Reviews
Letters



A STUDENT'S NIGHTMARE

...or a ufologist's dream?

SEE PETER ROGERSON ON PAGE 2

Prospects for the Nineties. John Harney

TWENTY years ago, in *Merseyside UFO Bulletin* (Vol. 2, No. 6, 1969), I wrote down my impressions of the nineteen-sixties, and ended by expressing the hope that the seventies would prove more eventful. There were two other articles on the same theme in that issue, by John Rimmer and Alan Sharp. On reading these ancient writings (as they must seem to some of our younger readers), I find that little has changed in the field of ufology in all those years. Indeed, the only really noticeable change which occurred during the eighties was that most UFO journal editors exchanged their battered old typewriters for word processors. This made it possible to churn out reams of drivel with much less effort.

There have been other changes of course, but, as with the introduction of word processors, they have been merely changes of detail. For example, whereas in

the sixties we had mysterious craters appearing in England, in the eighties we have our mysterious crop circles. There was also less emphasis on the psychological aspects of UFO reports in the sixties, except perhaps in the rather crude form of sceptics loudly asserting that ufologists were barmy.

In the issue of *Merseyside UFO Bulletin* mentioned above, John Rimmer made a number of predictions for the seventies. One of these was that a more open-minded approach to the subject would produce data of interest to various conventional scientific and academic disciplines, such as psychology and folklore. Since then, some psychologists have studied the subject, but they have tended to be people of unconventional views, such as Berthold Schwarz, a believer in the reality of psychic phenomena. **Continued on page nine.**

MAGONIA

Number 36.

(MUF0B 85)

EDITOR
JOHN RIMMER

Editorial Panel

John Hamney
Roger Sandell
Michael Goss
Nigel Watson

Corresponding Editors

Peter Rogerson
Robert Rankin

Overseas Correspondents

Martin Kottmeyer (USA)
Thierry Pinvidic (France)
Luis Gonzales (Spain)
Eduardo Russo (Italy)

SUBSCRIPTION DETAILS

Magonia is available by exchange with other publications or on subscription at the following rates for one year (four issues):

United Kingdom	£4.00
Europe and Irish Rep.	£5.00
United States	\$10
Other Countries	£5.50

US subscriptions *must* be paid in dollar bills. Due to exorbitant bank charges we are unable to accept cheques drawn on American banks.

French subscribers may find it easier and cheaper to send us a 50-franc banknote rather than pay for an International Money Order. We are happy to accept this.

Cheques and money orders should be made payable to 'John Rimmer'.

All correspondence, subscriptions and exchange magazines should be sent to the Editor:

John Rimmer
John Dee Cottage
5 James Terrace
Mortlake Churchyard
London SW14 8HB
England

©MAGONIA MAGAZINE, 1990

The copyright in all signed articles rest with the authors.



PETER ROGERSON'S NORTHERN ECHOES

JERRY CLARK challenges me to keep to writing of things which I know about (Letters, this issue). Here goes then:

To find out who is haunting your house, you need to

find out about past occupants. In a Corporate Town like Warrington this is quite easy, because voters' lists are preserved at the local library, and you can run through them to find out who died and when. You can then... *Editor and Readers - Get off, shut up, boo, hiss. I don't pay my subscription to read boring old rubbish like this!*

Sorry, Jerry. It looks as though you have been outvoted, and I shall have to carry on devoting my columns to topics about which I know as little as anybody else.

My last Northern Echoes piece made it clear that I shall not win any precognition prizes, but then neither will any of the great precognition-mongers. The twentieth century is coming to a *de facto* end before our eyes, live on TV. As I write this De Klerk has unbanned the ANC, Modrow has called for German unity and Gorbachov is going to argue for a multi-party state - *Magonia* knows what else by the time you read this. And all this without a word from Ms Dixon and company. Precognition is *disproven*.

The collapse of empires and the death of gods must be attended by its portents and wonders. Eastern Europe will have its UFO wave along with its Macdonalds. However, they will be swamped by apparitions of the BVM and vague national heroes. Meanwhile terrible and sinister spectres will be seen in the blasted country around Castle Ceausescu. The closing down of the cold war will have massive repercussions in the West; the death of devils too, does not go unheralded. Old style ufology, which re-emerged in the second cold war will disappear and haunting Keelian visions will return.

As the latest issue of *Fortean Times* reminds us, the crop circles are becoming a major folklore of these Green times. Some say they are the product of intelligence,

others of natural phenomena, or even - hint others - in some incomprehensible way a product of both. Maybe winds have ears and clouds, eyes; the breeze dreams dreams. This haunting ambiguity makes the

crop circles ideal mediating symbols between the domains of culture and wild nature, like the fairies before them. Soon we will hear the story of the person who entered on crop circle and disappears, only to emerge in another circle miles away. In these wild-hunt gale days anything seems almost possible.

Speaking of *Fortean Times* and crop circles, has a certain former civil servant, late of the Department of Defence, let the cat out of the bag? MIS bugging Esperantists has some sort of crazy logic, but orchid-growers? (But orchid rustlers are involved in the latest crash retrieval rumours from South Africa - Ed.) Is Mr Noyes hinting that all civil society is regarded with suspicion by THEM? Does every gardening club have a mole? Are all bee-keepers bugged? This could make the Colin Wallace, Fred Holroyd, Peter Wright story look like a vicarage teaparty!

Taking Jerome Clark's advice again for a moment, I return to something I know about - local history archives - and present you with the remarkable illustration which graces the cover of our mag. I stumbled across it in Warrington Library, in the first issue of the Padgate College Magazine, published locally in spring, 1947. In small letters under the drawing it is credited to a certain R Cheatham, and dated 1946, a year perhaps before the Arnold case. Just what is going on here?. Are those strange objects pre-Arnoldian UFOs? Do the dinosaurs indicate some kind of pre-von Daniken ancient astronaut speculations? Your guess is as good as mine. Probably R Cheatham is still around. Do any of our readers know him? We'd like to learn more about this strange piece of artwork!

Abductions: who's being taken for a ride?

John Rimmer reviews recent developments in the abduction field

ARE UFO abductions finally moving where they belong, i.e. out of the hands of ufologists? This question is prompted by several recent books, and news of new directions in UFO research which is starting to emerge from the USA.

There has been a tendency over the past couple of years to see American UFO research as monolithic and ETH-dominated, especially in the abduction field, which Europeans have seen as being led by Hopkins and his genetic-experimenting aliens. Of course, this is a great over-simplification: we only have to look at the writings of Martin Kottmeyer and Dennis Stillings in this magazine and elsewhere to see that alternative viewpoints are articulately expressed.

Perhaps less appreciated in Britain is the split that is developing between Bud Hopkins and a number of researchers who had initially cooperated with him in hypnotic regression of suspected abductees. In the last *Magonia* I mentioned briefly the rift between Hopkins and psychologist Rima Laibow, and in Whitley Strieber's *Communion* and particularly his second book of personal experiences, *Transformation*, we miss increasing disenchantment with ufology - or to be more precise, Bud Hopkins's version of it.

In a book recently published in America, *Report on Communion* (1) by Ed Conroy, Strieber's contacts with ufologists are chronicled in some detail. *Report* is intended as an independent assessment of the nature of Strieber's experience, particularly in the light of his life and background. 'Independent' is perhaps too strong a word, as the author is a friend of Strieber, and appears broadly sympathetic to Strieber's own assessment of his experiences. However, the book provides an interesting perspective on Strieber's own account, and provides much background opinion to help us confirm or adjust our own opinions.

There are two easy ways of looking at the events described in *Communion*. One is to say they are pure invention, created by a skilled fiction writer; the other is to say they are a physical reality which happened in real-time. Both these possibilities deserve consideration, although for obvious reasons the

former has been debated in a rather circumspect manner, especially in countries where the libel laws are such a Mickey Mouse affair as ours (2). However, for the purposes of any thorough investigation of Strieber's experiences, there is no need to have to choose between these possibilities, as the number of more likely explanations is legion.

Most of the later part of *Report* is taken up by a comparison between the *Communion* events and entities with tradition folklore entities - particularly Irish - and an assessment of the abduction experience in Jungian terms, and of course these are points which carry on from Strieber's own speculations in *Transformation*. At this point, an interesting thing happens. Strieber crosses the Atlantic, as it were, and seems to have far more in common with the worlds of *Magonia*, *Mohaut* and *Mouge* than he does with MUFON and Majestic. And it is here that the largest single gap in Conroy's assessment occurs. Apart from Vallee, who is quoted extensively and approvingly, Conroy seems to be almost totally unaware that there is an alternative ufological viewpoint to the ETH. This is almost certainly a product of the high profile that the ETHers have now achieved in the USA. Apart from the controversial influence or otherwise of *Science and the UFO*, the only other European UFO book extensively cited by Conroy seems to be Tim Good's *Above Top Secret*. Which is a shame as Conroy's understanding of the mythic content of the UFO and abduction experience puts him far closer to the European researchers than to Good or mainstream USA thought.

The impression comes across strongly in *Communion* that Strieber was something of a ufological virgin until his experiences started and he came across Randles and Warrington's *Science and the UFO*. This may be so, but Conroy has unearthed some fascinating material about the young Whitley's extraterrestrial interests back home in San Antonio.

Mrs Ann Hix forms an interesting footnote to the history of ufology. Her husband, Col. Guy Hix was commander of Godman Air Force Base, Kentucky, in

1 Conroy, Ed.
Report on Communion
William Morrow & Co., New York.
1989.

2 It is worth mentioning here that Conroy describes in some detail the conflict between Strieber and Jenny Randles, which led to Randles being forced to issue a retraction of certain comments made on a local radio station in Lancashire - does Strieber have an exceptionally powerful radio set, or did A. N. Other tell him about it for their own murky motives? - and her publisher issuing a grovelling statement about the unauthorised use of a quote from *Communion*. As described by Conroy, Strieber's behaviour over this matter seems somewhat irrational, and it is clear that Ms Randles has been most shabbily treated.

in 1947 at the time the ill-fated Capt. Mantell took off to investigate a UFO, and became America's first UFO-related fatality. As a result of the legal wranglings which followed this case, commander Hix and his wife moved to San Antonio, Texas, where their sons became boyhood playmates of one Whitley Strieber. At about this time - the era of the first Soviet sputnik - Strieber and his friends formed a rocket club, which reached the front page of the local paper when they launched a 'frognik' - a home made rocket carrying a frog

Here I must mention a piece of information that has come from our American Correspondent Martin Kottmeyer, which he came across too late for inclusion in his article 'Entirely Unprejudiced' in the last *Magonia*. You will recall that in this article Kottmeyer described some remarkable correspondences between film and SF treatment of the alien experience, and 'real-life' abduction reports. In particular an episode of the sixties SF series *Twilight Zone*, called 'The Bellerophon Shield' shown on American TV a few days before the Hill Case, which features aliens with 'wraparound' eyes as described by the Hill's - a feature not previously remarked on in contact cases. Martin Kottmeyer draws out attention to a piece of dialogue from the film:

CREATURE: I analyse your eyes. In all the universes, in all the unities beyond all the universes, all who have eyes, have eyes that speak. And all speak the same language.

JUDITH (awed, intrigued): How can you speak my language?

CREATURE: I learn each word just before you speak it. Your eyes teach me.

Now compare this with a remarkable section of the transcript of Barney Hill's hypnotic regression:

BARNEY: Yes. they won't talk to me. Only the eyes are talking to me. H+I don't understand that. Oh - the eyes don't have a body. They're just eyes...

It is clear that we have here a most significant clue to the origins of the modern American abduction experience

It is interesting to speculate what might have happened if, after his amnesiac tour of Europe Strieber had decided to settle as an American in Paris. Perhaps nothing. Maybe, in a different intellectual climate he would have become a cultural insider, and the 'visitor experiences' would have taken a different form, had they occurred at all. If they did happen, would they have developed differently if his first contacts with the world of ufology had been via some of the French ufologists rather than Hopkins? The cultural identity between the abduction experience and North American society is so strong (pace Bullard) that my suspicion is that Strieber just would not have had these experiences.

It would also be interesting to speculate what might have been the result if Strieber's first contact with ufology had been via the Swedish researchers described in John Spencer's *Perspectives* (3) - Bertil Kuhlmann and Arne Groth.

Spencer's book is a plea for abduction research - indeed UFO research in general - to be witness-led rather than researcher-led. The convention approach to abductees by ufologists, he claims, leads to a story emerging which conforms to the ufologist's preconceptions, and he makes the point that an abductee presented to a past-lives researcher might come up with a variation on a reincarnation story. This is a fascinating suggestion with links to some recent US research which I shall look at in a moment. He points as an example of witness-led investigation a Swedish abduction case from 1974 investigated by Kuhlmann and Groth.

Here the initial event seems 'conventional' enough: a man returning home in a lonely country area suffers a missing time period

after a close encounter with a mysterious light. An initial hypnotic regression produces a narrative of abduction by four tall, 'semi-transparent' beings who communicated by 'musical tones'. The percipient, 'Anders' was not happy with the direction of the investigation, and at this point Groth was introduced to the case. He abandoned hypnotic regression and allowed the witness to move the investigation into the directions he felt happiest with.

The investigations, under the percipient's own direction, began to move away radically from the conventional lines we expect from a UFO-investigator directed case, and in a far more mystically inclined area, with both investigator, percipient, and others engaged in dowsing and the range of activities we think of as 'earth-mysteries', and working with such concepts as earth-energies, body-energies resembling kundalini, and the Gaia concept. It is hard to see how the investigation might continue, and it seems unlikely that it will ever come to what most ufologists would consider a 'conclusion'. If nothing else one must admire the sheer patience of Kuhlmann and Groth, who seem to have spent years and years following the whims of their abductee. I guess many 'investigator-led' researchers would have given it up as a bad job years ago. It is also apparent that the approach taken by both investigators and percipient is influenced by cultural concepts of society and land that are distinctively Scandinavian.

A major part of the book is an account of the seminal (no pun intended, or was it just a Freudian slip?) Hill Case. Spencer's approach was outlined in his talk to the BUFORA International Conference in 1988, and a recent series of articles in *UFO Times*. He concludes broadly that the Hill case arose from Barney's dream experiences after the sighting of a relatively low-key UFO during the course of their drive. Barney's experience were shared, consciously and unconsciously, with Betty, until they jointly emerged during the course of the investigation.

It is surprising that Spencer, a long-time BUFORA Committee Member, seems unaware of the nature of much of British ufology, and its divergence from the American pattern as does Ed Conroy. I find it difficult to accept his constant assertions that British abduction researchers are simply following in the footsteps of the Americans. He seems to imply that most British researchers are simply Hopkins clones - this is happily far from the case. In fact his constant harping of the ETH domination of British ufology is irritating and detracts from his book. Of course, there are British researchers who are still attached to the ETH, just as there are American researchers who have jettisoned it; but the overall picture is very different from Spencer's caricature.

But even in America, attitudes are changing, and Hopkins himself seems to be becoming an increasingly isolated figure with his naive scenario of alien interbreeding and genetic experiments. As I mentioned in the Editorial of *Magonia* 35, the abduction experience in America is now beginning to attract the attention of psychologists, therapists and other mental-health professionals, as well as engaging the attention of parapsychologists who have up to now been working in other fields.

A very interesting report by the Near Death

Experience researcher Kenneth Ring has recently come our way by mysterious means. In it he summarises a psychological profiling exercise amongst abductees, NDE experiencers, and, as controls, researchers into these subjects. He finds, as will be no surprise to faithful *Magonia* readers, a considerable degree of similarity between the two groups of experiencers. He also claims that the results do not show any significant degree of 'fantasy proneness' amongst the two experient groups. I am rather doubtful about the significance of this finding, as the questions designed to determine fantasy proneness not only seem extremely subjective - "Did you day-dream a lot as a child?" - but in many cases suggest the answer the researcher would like to hear. They seem to be making the respondent choose between "Are you a dull, uninteresting little bore", and "Are you a sensitive, fascinating human being who has lots of exciting things happen to him?".

Just as interesting as the responses of the experiencers are the responses of the investigators. As Ring describes them they are hardly a 'control group' - a real control would surely be a random group of people with little or no interest in the subjects. Indeed, they show responses of often remarkably similar to the experiencers. It would appear that becoming *interested* in NDEs or UFOs is almost as life-changing an experience as having an NDE or UFO experience. It is also of note that UFO researchers' responses are consistently more to the 'strange' side of the equation than NDE investigators' - sometimes in fact more 'strange' than NDE experiencers. Perhaps reflecting the fact that NDE studies are a more 'acceptable' topic for academic research than UFO experiences.

In *The Evidence for Alien Abductions* (4) (which, you will be delighted to hear, is soon to be published in a Japanese edition) I put forward the suggestion that the abduction experience is a *symptom* rather than a cause of personality change. It now seems that becoming interested in UFOs may be a symptom of a similar process.

Ring's interest in ufology, via abductions, is significant, and is an example of the 'professionalisation' of UFO, particularly abduction research. This trend has got furthest in America, where psychologists, psychoanalysts and therapists are moving into the abduction field. One of the leading figures in this move is the aforementioned Rima Laibow, a psychotherapist who is one of the prime movers of the semi-mysterious TREAT - Treatment and Research of Experienced Anomalous Trauma.

In the last *Magonia* editorial I welcomed the appearance amongst abduction researchers of professional psychologists, therapists, etc., particularly as current research is continuing to show some sort of connection between the abduction

experience, and a history of childhood sexual abuse towards the abductee (a finding which is reinforced by the Ring survey mentioned above). But there is another side to such involvement which will also need to be addressed.

In an article in the January 1990 issue of *MUFON UFO Journal* (5) Rima Laibow looks at the complementary roles of the amateur ufologists and the professional therapist. Much of the article is a sensible analysis of how these two groups can work together - the therapist looking after the interests of the individual concerned, the ufologists putting the individual experience into a wider perspective. Towards the end however, her paper turns into a plea for the therapist to be able to charge a fee for her/his work with the abductee. The ufologists, she argues, are allowed to profit from the books and articles they write on abductions (well, some do, most don't, not even those who get their books translated

into Japanese), so it is only fair, isn't it, that the professional therapist should also turn an honest penny without charges of 'profiteering' from the UFO community. One American correspondent has commented that there is already the suspicion arising in the USA that the growing hostility between abduction researchers and professionals (such as that between Hopkins and Laibow) is because the latter see the former as 'siphoning off' potentially lucrative cases.

Despite that, the professionals do have a fair argument. We are dealing with highly trained people whose time is money and there is a limit to the amount of unpaid work they can do on a charitable basis. But here we have the fundamental question: who pays? The

abductees themselves? In any other case where people are undergoing private treatment by a medical specialist, this is the case, but how many abductees could afford it? Are those who can't to be left, as now, to the tender mercies of the untrained ufologist? Or should the ufologists pay? Fine if there's a chance of a profitable book in it, but I can't see too many ufologists forking out the fees that any qualified psychiatrist or psychotherapist would be asking - especially in America where they are paid almost as much plumbers. I suppose in Britain there's the possibility of abduction therapy on the National Health - oh, well then, Mr Clarke, there isn't.

So we are left with the almost certain conclusion that the majority of abductees are going to have their most traumatic experiences, and their lives, explored and explained by a group of poorly trained, amateur hobbyists.

Someone's being taken for a ride, but I can't for the life of me work out who.

We are left with the almost certain conclusion that the majority of abductees are going to have their most traumatic experiences, and their lives, explored and explained by a group of poorly trained, amateur hobbyists.

3. Spencer, John. *Perspectives*. Macdonald, 1990. £12.95.

4. Rimmer, John. *Evidence for Alien Abductions*. Aquarian Press, 1984. Available from *Magonia* for £2.00, including post and packing.

5. *MUFON UFO Journal*, 103 Oldtowne Rd., Seguin, TX 78155-4099, USA. Greatly improved under its present editor, the Journal is now a major forum for debate on the abduction phenomenon in the USA.

Recommended.



SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION: a nineteenth century view

This article is from a book published in London in 1826. It is Volume III in a series entitled: **The Family Oracle of Health; Economy, Medicine and Good Living; Adapted to all Ranks of Society, from the Palace to the Cottage.** By A.F. Crell, MD. FRS., and W.M. Wallace, Esq., Assisted by a Committee of Scientific Gentlemen.

SOME READERS may have made the remark, that the face of particular drunkards, at certain times, appears as much like a burning coal as any thing can well be conceived. It was probably a face of this kind that suggested Shakespeare's description of Bardolph's nose.

We read in the transactions of Copenhagen, that in 1692, a woman of the lower class, who for three years had used spirituous liquors to such excess that she would take no other nourishment, having sat down one evening on a straw chair to sleep, was consumed in the night time, so that next morning no part of her was found but the skull, and the extreme joints of the fingers; all the rest of her body, says Jacobaeus, was reduced to ashes.

The following extract of the memoir of Bianchini, is taken from the Annual Register for 1763. The Countess Cornelia Bandi, of the town of Cesena, aged 62, enjoyed a good state of health. One evening, having experienced a sort of drowsiness, she retired to bed, and her maid remained with her till she fell asleep. Next morning when the girl entered to awaken her mistress, she found nothing but her remains, in a most horrid condition.

At the distance of four feet from the bed was a heap of ashes, in which could be distinguished legs and arms untouched. Between the legs lay the head, the brain of which, together with half the posterior part of the cranium, and the whole chin, had been consumed; three fingers were found in the state of a coal; the rest of the body was reduced to ashes, and contained no oil; the tallow of two candles was melted on a table, but the wicks still remained, and the feet of the candlesticks were covered with a certain moisture. The bed was not damaged, the bed clothes and covering were raised up and thrown on one side, as is the case when a person gets up. The furniture and tapestry were covered with a moist kind of soot, of the colour of ashes, which had penetrated into the drawers and dirtied the linen. This soot having been conveyed to a neighbouring kitchen, adhered to the walls and the utensils. A piece of bread in the cupboard was covered with it, and no dog would

touch it. The infectious odour had been communicated to other apartments. The Annual Register states, that the Countess Cesena was accustomed to bathe her body in camphorated spirit of wine.

An instance of the like kind is preserved in the same work, in a letter of Mr. Wilmer, surgeon. "Mary Clues, aged fifty, was much addicted to intoxication. Her propensity to this vice had increased after the death of her husband, which happened a year and a half before; for about a year, scarcely a day had passed in the course of which she did not drink at least half a pint of rum or anniseed water. Her health gradually declined, and about the beginning of February, she was attacked by the jaundice, and confined to her bed. Though she was incapable of much action, and not in a condition to work, she still continued her old habit of drinking every day, and smoking a pipe of tobacco. The bed in which she lay, stood parallel to the chimney of the apartment; the distance from it was about three feet. On Saturday, the 1st of March, she fell on the floor, and her extreme weakness having prevented her from getting up, she remained in that state till some one entered and put her to bed. The following night she wished to be left alone; a woman quitted her at half past eleven, and, according to custom, shut the door and locked it. She had put on the fire two large pieces of coal, and placed a light in a candlestick on a chair, at the head of the bed. At half after five in the morning, a smoke was seen issuing through the window, and the door being speedily broke open, some flames which were in the room were soon extinguished.

Between the bed and the chimney, were found the remains of the unfortunate Clues; one leg and a thigh were still entire, but there remained nothing of the skin, the muscles, and the viscera. The bones of the cranium, the breast, the spine, and the upper extremities, were entirely calcined, and covered with a whitish efflorescence. The people were much surprised that the furniture had sustained so little injury. The side of the bed which was next to the chimney, had suffered the most; the wood of it was slightly burnt, but the feather bed, the clothes and covering, were safe. I entered the apartment about

two hours after it had been opened, and observed that the walls and every thing in it were blackened; that it was filled with a very disagreeable vapour; but that nothing except the body exhibited any strong traces of fire."

This instance has great similarity to that related by Vicq d'Azyr, in the *Encyclopédie Méthodique*, under the head "Pathologic Anatomy of Man." A woman about 50 years of age, who indulged to excess in spirituous liquors, and got drunk every day before she went to bed, was found entirely burnt and reduced to ashes. Some of the osseous parts only were left, but the furniture of the apartment had suffered very little damage. Vicq d'Azyr, instead of disbelieving this phenomenon, adds, that there have been many other instances of the like kind.

The transactions of the Royal Society of London present also an instance of human combustion no less extraordinary. It was mentioned at the time it happened in all the journals; it was then attested by a great number of eye-witnesses, and became the subject of a great many learned discussions. Three accounts of this event, by different authors, all nearly coincide. The fact is related as follows: "Grace Pitt, the wife of a fishmonger of the parish of St. Clement, Ipswich, aged about 60, had contracted a habit, which she continued for several years, of coming down every night from her bed-room, half-dressed, to smoke a pipe. On the night of the 9th of April, 1744, she got up from bed as usual. Her daughter, who slept with her, did not perceive she was absent till next morning when she awoke, soon after which she put on her clothes, and going down into the kitchen, found her mother stretched out on the right side, with her head near the grate; the body extended on the hearth, with the legs on the floor, (which was of deal,) having the appearance of a log of wood, consumed by a fire, without apparent flame. On beholding this spectacle, the girl ran in great haste and poured over her mother's body some water, contained in two large vessels, in order to extinguish the fire; while the foetid odour and smoke which exhaled from the body, almost suffocated some of the neighbours who had hastened to the girl's assistance. The trunk was, in some measure, incinerated, and resembled a heap of coals covered with white ashes. The head, the arms, the legs, and the thighs, had also participated in the burning. This woman, it is said, had drunk a large quantity of spirituous liquor in consequence of being overjoyed to hear that one of her daughters had returned from Gibraltar. There was no fire in the grate, and the candle had burnt entirely out in the candlestick, which was close to her. Besides, there were found near the consumed body, the clothes of a child and a paper screen, which had sustained no injury by the fire. The dress of this woman consisted of a cotton gown.

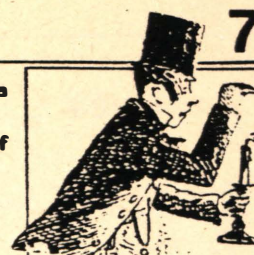
Le Cat, in a memoir on spontaneous burning, mentions several other instances of combustion of the human body. "Having," says he, "spent several months at Rheims, in the years 1724, and 1725, I lodged at the house of Sieur Millet, whose wife got intoxicated every day. The domestic economy of the family was managed by a pretty young girl, which I must not omit to remark, in order that all the circumstances which accompanied the fact I am about to relate, may be better understood. This woman was found consumed on the 20th of February 1725, at the distance of a foot and a half from

the hearth in her kitchen. A part of the head only, with a portion of the lower extremities and a few of the vertebrae, had escaped combustion. A foot and a half of the flooring, under the body, had been consumed, but a kneading-trough and a powdering tub, which were very near the body, sustained no injury. M. Chriteau, a surgeon, examined the remains of the body with every judicial formality. Jean Millet, the husband, being interrogated by the judges who instituted the inquiry into the affair, declared, that about eight in the evening on the 19th of February, he had retired to rest with his wife, who not being able to sleep, had gone into the kitchen, where he thought she was warming herself; that, having fallen asleep, he was awakened about two o'clock with an infectious odour, and that having run to the kitchen, he found the remains of his wife in the state described in the report of the physicians and surgeons. The judges having no suspicion of the real cause of this event, prosecuted the affair with the utmost diligence. It was very unfortunate for Millet that he had a handsome servant maid, for neither his probity

It was very unfortunate for Millet that he had a handsome servant-maid for neither his probity nor innocence was able to save him from the suspicion of having got rid of his wife

nor innocence was able to save him from the suspicion of having got rid of his wife by a concerted plot, and of having arranged the rest of the circumstances in such a manner as to give the appearance of an accident. He experienced, therefore, the whole severity of the law; and though, by an appeal to a superior and very enlightened court, which discovered the cause of the combustion, he came off victorious, he suffered so much from uneasiness of mind, that he was obliged to pass the remainder of his melancholy days in an hospital.

The multiplicity and uniformity of these facts, which occurred in different places, and were attested by so many enlightened men, carry with them conviction; they have such a relation to each other, we are inclined to ascribe them to the same cause. 1st. The persons who experienced the effects of this combustion, had for a long time made immoderate use of spirituous liquors. 2nd. The combustion took place only in women. 3rd. These women were far advanced in life. 4th. Their bodies did not take fire spontaneously, but were burnt by accident. 5th. The extremities, such as the feet and hands, were spared by the fire. 6th. Water sometimes, instead of extinguishing the flames which proceeded from the parts on fire, gave them more activity. 7th. The fire did very little damage, and often spared the combustible objects, which were in contact with the human body at the moment when it was burning. 8th. The combustion of the bodies left a residuum of fat foetid ashes, with an unctuous, stinking, and very penetrating soot.



Anyone who reads this book today will certainly be grateful for the National Health Service. These days we do not expect to have mercury prescribed for indigestion; nor do we expect to be bled with leeches or have purgatives or clysters (enemas) administered for practically any illness you can think of! There is some fascinating material in this volume, but I think our readers will consider this item most relevant to their interests.

DELUSIONS

Manfred Cassirer



1. LEA, H. C. *History of Witchcraft*, Yoseloff, New York, 1957, p.563.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 263.

3. *Ibid.*, p.610.

4. THURSTON, H. *Surprising Mystics*, Burns Oates, 1951, p.179.

5. CASSIRER, M. *The Evidence for Materialisation*, (unpub. MS) 1983.

DELUSION says the C.O.D., is a process that entails elements of 'imposing or being imposed on'; a 'false impression' or an unfounded 'opinion'. There is a distinct feeling of malaise about the concept. So what about 'illusions', with which they are often confounded? These are supposed to have an underlying physical stimulus, though the dictionary suggests that here also 'deception' of some kind, if not the very same delusive process, may be at work. At the very least illusions trigger off a false belief regarding the nature of the object perceived.

Ecstasies and mystics, who are prone to such alleged deviations from sanity have not always been good news for the Church, the more spectacular antics of saints who insisted on disruptive activities like flying about during Divine service were frowned upon rather than encouraged by their superiors: the whole business was more embarrassing than edifying. A crucial aspect of the scenario was one of doubt, since there was a strong suspicion in the minds of theologians of diabolic involvement. Well might the enlightened Renaissance Jesuit von Spee wonder how the poor judge was expected to "distinguish between the vision and reality". At a psychological level, scholars were aware that one could easily be tricked by hysterics and mountebanks. Joseph of Cupertino (whom we have previously discussed in *Magazine* 28, January 1988) was as above suspicion as was, proverbially, Cassirer's wife. As an accredited candidate for canonisation he could be excused for floating about the choir (even if looked on askance by the vergers), whereas Magdalena Crucia of Cordova rising above her station - in an all too literal sense - narrowly escaped the stake.(1)

Mental balance is not inconsistency with occasional misperceptions among otherwise healthy people; in extreme cases they may turn out to be as weird and unrealistic as green angels or cats of the same colour, and phantasmal sights can be triggered off by obscure processes. They are usually the visionary's 'private property', but some (e.g. at Fatima)

are shared, the exclusiveness of UFO abductions is familiar ground. Historically witches felt threatened by demonic apparitions to which third parties (like their judges) were insensible. Remy did not consider this a good reason for disbelief since they would still complain of demonic affliction when on the point of being burnt.(2) But Remy denied that they could raise the dead, who only *appeared* to be alive.(3)

In post-medieval England and America 'spectral evidence' was the judicial linch-pin in trials for sorcery. It was twofold: either evidence that the accused had actually been seen at the *stricium* or 'witches Sabbath'; or evidence of someone having appeared in spectral form to do harm, usually in the guise of an animal-shaped imp. If in human likeness it recalls the 'phantasms of the living' of psychical research, but with the additional element of malice aforethought - an element of premeditated crime rare in modern accounts. Entranced and possessed, the victim might show surprising paranormal powers. Uncorroborated accusations, however ludicrous, were taken seriously with dire consequences. But conscientious judges were uneasy about contradictory testimony that the supposed culprit had been seen at the *stricium* while asleep at home! It was conflicting evidence of this kind that gave rise to misgivings on the part of the judiciary.

To fuel the confusion it was feared that the untiring Agent of all that dismay and misleads honest men and women could with his limitless cunning fabricate a 'sulphurous' impersonation by the temporary creation of a convincing lay-figure defying detection. At the most primitive level of deception that notorious servant of the Lower Region, the canny Isabel Gowdie, put a broom into her conjugal bed to take her place whilst she was absent elsewhere! Such infantile tricks delighted the simple, but evoked derision in more sophisticated quarters. Among the religious, Teresa Haggison was persuaded that her outward form was assumed not only by her guardian angel but on several occasions by the devil.(4) Increase Mather would have it that "The devil makes

witches to dream strange dreams of themselves and others". This is not a far cry from Lewis Carroll's Red Queen, nor indeed (shorn of its mythological trappings) from Schrenck-Notzing's 'exteriorised dreams' by which his physical mediums brought into temporary existence phantom figures more or less tangible.

On the debit side it was argued that the whole sorry business be dismissed with costs as a delusion and confabulation. Thus the good and humane Bishop Hutchinson complained of folk being tricked by an 'internal image' devoid of objective existence: a theory to please Tyrell, the great champion of the non-physicality of apparitions, had he ever delved into the murky waters of witchcraft.

One salient point at issues was as usual a theological one: whether the Almighty would permit the guiltless to be 'framed'; and much of the incident discussion is pertinent to the quest for the physical component of phantom figures, whether manifesting as spontaneous phenomena - in which case the data do not favour it - or of the embodied entities of yesterday's seance-room for materialisation, where the evidence points in that direction.⁽⁵⁾ An Elizabethan narrative illustrates some of the problems of our main theme.

Since there had been a series of crimes in a certain house defying explanation, a night-vigil was kept. In the early hours of the morning a 'revered matron', the 'most noble lady of the town' was prevented in the nick of time from murdering a cradled infant. There was no question of mistaken identity. In view of her status this could clearly be none other than a case of impersonation: a diabolic trick to implicate an innocent party.⁽⁶⁾

Anglo-Saxon victims of witchcraft seem anyway to have quite a flair for identifying phantasmagorical simulacra during hysterical seizures, and in naming their physical counterparts even when blindfolded, they knew 'all about' their supposed tormentors, but Hutchinson questioned the *legality* of such evidence, which he dismissed as the 'fantastic notions' and 'sickly visitations' of 'crack-brained' girls who left the 'lives of innocent men naked without defence.'

Notwithstanding the steady decline of belief in demonology in the course of the eighteenth century,⁽⁷⁾ there were even half-way old-fashioned scientists like Jean Pontas who "could not wholly cast aside the authority of the past."⁽⁸⁾

In as far as hallucinations and delusions were acknowledged, they were considered to be supernaturally induced rather than as natural states of temporary psychological aberration.

The Restoration scholar and writer Joseph Glanville still clung to a false dichotomy of 'ghosts' as either the shades of the dead (i.e. revenants) or the deceptions of a 'ludicrous demon', and some of the statements to the courts cannot fail to raise a wry smile at the expense of the simple informant, no doubt acting in good faith. One such saw a lock of wool through a cottage window and identified it as 'white and black imps' - no laughing matter as far as the inhabitant of that cottage was concerned.⁽⁹⁾ Still, there is always the curious episode relating to that archetypal witch Bridget Bishop, a malicious and terrifying crone who practised the Black Arts. Richard Coman testified that she, together with another, had invaded his bed-chamber. Coman was in bed with his wife and, since a light was burning, presumably still awake. These two

uninvited and uninviting spectres made themselves available for a repeat performance the next night when, as in the case of an ordinary haunting the poor man was almost thrown out of bed. A relative of his then joined the fun to observe at first hand. Not, it is true, without some verbal suggestion the newcomer was strangely affected and suffered a spell of aphasia, the fact that the experience was shared (there was still another witness) reinforces the validity of the observations, such visitations being then invariably attributed to sinister causes.⁽¹⁰⁾

The phenomenal aspects of this account are worth considering. Except in haunted houses or places, apparitions are usually seen once only, and to be favoured with the sight of more than one phantom at any time is rare outside the UFO-related encounter. The SPR Census of Hallucinations of 1894 concludes that where there are two or more persons present, about one third share the experience - with the surprising proviso that the vision is most probably an illusion inspired by a 'real' object.⁽¹¹⁾ The immediate stimulus may be, it was thought, either mental suggestion or verbal suggestion. The investigators favoured *mental* suggestion on the grounds that there is *experimental* evidence for telepathically produced hallucinations.



"A malicious and terrifying crone who practised the Black Arts..."

In a recent study by Green and McCrory, apparitions show occasional divergence with regard to the 'object' in view. This also, as we shall presently see, happened in the case of Joseph Bailey and his wife, whose psychic experiences, characteristically contaminated with demonic features, are nonetheless instructive. On their way to Boston, Mass., the couple approached the residence of one John Procter, then in prison on a charge of witchcraft, when Bailey catches sight of the said Procter (or his double?) looking out of the window and Mrs Procter standing in the doorway. However, all Mrs Bailey sees is "a little maid at the door". Still *en route* the husband comes across an unidentified female, again invisible to his spouse.

Hansen rightly insists on the quality of the evidence, apparently given in all good faith, with due attention to detail and without glossing over discrepancies. Were it not for the hallucinated(?) figure of the girl seen by Mrs Bailey her husband's

6. KITTREDGE, G. L. *Witchcraft in Old and New England*, Harvard 1928, p.223. This could be accounted for in terms of dual personality, if this unsubstantiated and uncorroborated tale is to be credited.

7. SCARRE, G. *Witchcraft and Magic in 16th and 17th Century Europe*, Macmillan 1987, pp.54ff.

8. LEA, H. C. *Op. cit.*, p.1376.

9. GURNEY, E. *Phantasms of the Living*, Truebner, 1886, p.174.

10. BAINE, R. M. *Daniel Defoe and the Supernatural*, Univ. of Georgia, 1968, p.88.

11. *Proceedings of the SPR*, vol. X

12. MOSS, P. *Ghosts over Britain*, Elm Tree Books, 1977, p.160.

13. DAVIS, R. T. *Four Centuries of Witchcraft*, Methuen, 1947, p.196.

14. WRIGHT, H. B. *Witness to Witchcraft*, Transworld, 1964, p.117.

15. DAVIS, *Op. cit.*, p.109.

16. THURSTON, *Op. cit.*, p.180.

16. THURSTON, *Op. cit.*, p.180.
 17. HANSEN, C. *Witchcraft at Salem*, Arrow, 1971, p.205.
 18. MATHER, C. *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, J R Smith, 1862.
 19. Schrenk-Notzing records an even more ridiculous incident (a skeleton that danced a tango) in SORENE-NOTZING, A. v. *Phenomena of Materialisation*, Kegan Paul, 1920. Maurice Barbanell, the well-known founder and life-long editor of *Psychic News* narrates how he had danced with a materialised figure which he knew not to be the medium.

adventure in the paranormal could be attributed to a morbid condition, of which there is some indication in the narrative. Of course his failure to see the girl (if physically present) might be due to an altered perception. The spectral woman who approaches him later turns into a cow, a transmutation that agrees with seventeenth century - but much less with present day - belief structures. Even so, similar things are alleged to happen closer to our own times. In an SPR account Mr John Barrett is amazed by a sheep-like creature evaporating before his very eyes in bright sunlight. Elsewhere one hears of a calf with glowing eyes that simply fades away like an old soldier, and of a canine looking beast turning into a black donkey.⁽¹²⁾ In 1853 a most unorthodox white rabbit was seen in the West Country. Given an unkind kick it prudently dematerialised at the double, but "the old woman who was suspected was laid up in bed for three days afterwards unable to walk about."⁽¹³⁾

The African explorer Harry B. Wright was fairly sure that he had witnessed lycanthropy.⁽¹⁴⁾ Earlier Mirandola had defied popular opinion by disbelieving in something so patently absurd, just as Remy was to disown expressions of mythomania like metamorphosis of man into wolf (Wright's had involved leopards). But whereas Mirandola envisaged "deceits of the devil", Remy explicitly denounced hellish "sensory delusion and glamour" liable to "disrupt human perception" to the point at which men were sure that they had actually seen and heard what was purely imaginary.

In the notorious *Melissa Matricaria* the authors denounce the 'heresy' that "the imagination of some men is so vivid that they actually see figures and appearances which are but the reflection of their thoughts, and then they are believed to be apparitions of evil spirits or even spectres of witches." Experience shows that visions of this kind are spontaneously generated and scholars like Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82) realized that those most eager to see them are by and large the least likely to do so⁽¹⁵⁾ just as the

integrated simpleton who tries to attract Satan's attention is almost bound to be unsuccessful. On the other hand, the Fiend has an unpleasant habit of forcing himself on the good and saintly by inducing horrid shapes and nightmares on their virginal field of vision.⁽¹⁶⁾ Squire Montpeyson can be quoted as an example. A man of upright character he became the innocent victim of an exasperatingly tedious *gaist* who played 'unlucky tricks' on him and his family.⁽¹⁷⁾ Doors opened of their own accord "with a noise as if half a dozen had come in and pressed who should come in first, and walk about the house." This insubstantial cavalcade, imperceptible to sight, one might be inclined to dismiss as an auditory aberration foisted by a persistent syndrome of paranormal impressions, were it not that at another time the same household was afflicted by a regular invasion of half-seen phantoms consisting of "a great Body with two glaring Eyes, which for some time were fixed (upon a servant), and at last disappeared", evidently to everyone's considerable relief.

If this is considered too weird, then what are we to make of Cotton Mather's spectral jig one Christmas Day? A patient of his, Mercy Short, is said to have been taken unawares by a company or troop of spirits who "said that they were going to have a dance, and immediately those who were attending her most plainly heard and felt a dance as of bare-foot people upon the floor, whereof they are ready to make oath before any lawful authority."⁽¹⁸⁾

It is clear from Mather's additional note that he is not just telling a tall story. In fact there is a close parallel from modern times. 19 Together with similar strange but well-attested material it suggests a diminishing line of demarcation between delusions and hallucinations on the one hand and a more objective and tangible mystery on the other. This borderline element, hard to embrace even within the semi-miraculous realm of the paranormal, is one which, in my opinion it would be arbitrary to reject out of hand.

Continued from Page One

The data provided by UFO reports and investigations of them contain much that would be useful to science, but potential researchers obviously regard them as being tainted by the notoriety attached to ufology. The extraction of useful information from the data is thus very much in the hands of amateurs, or qualified scientists working independently, such as Dr Terence Meaden, who is developing his vortex theory to account for the crop circles.

This activity, by independent workers, using information gathered by ufologists to further their own specialist studies, is likely to increase during the nineties. I think it will also be accompanied by another development. In 1997 the 50th anniversary of Kenneth Arnold's sighting will be celebrated. This event will inspire some enthusiasts to embark on the work

of summing up 50 years of the UFO controversy and trying to place it in a historical perspective. There are many questions to be asked. We know how ufology, in more or less its present form, began, but what has sustained it for such a long time? Why do people want to believe that we are being watched by extraterrestrial intelligences? Is it a substitute for conventional religion, as spiritualism was to some extent during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? To what extent is ufology maintained by sensational popular journalism?

The survival of ufology as a popularly recognised field of investigation and speculation has always depended on a widespread belief that the UFOs are manifestations of extraterrestrial intelligence. That many people feel the need to believe this is attested by the success of books which merely hint at the

possibility that the extraterrestrial hypothesis (ETH) may be true. It is also demonstrated by the resentment shown to anyone who undertakes a critical evaluation of the evidence presented. The main threat to the ETH, though, comes from those critics who have actually studied the subject, people who do not waste their time demolishing stories which few ufologists have ever believed anyway.

It seems to me that ufology in more or less its present form will last at least until the end of the century, as most adherents of the ETH are not susceptible to reason, having emotional needs which can be to some extent satisfied by enthusing over UFO reports. They will, however, find themselves increasingly isolated from the mainstream of the investigation of UFO reports and other anomalies.

NEW AGE, SAME OLD STORY

A book review by
Roger Sandell

The quest for the miraculous and

supernatural has been a recurring theme in American culture. The Millerite Adventist movement in the 1830's proclaimed the return of Christ in 1843 and spread its message through small communities via itinerant preachers. When the millennium failed to arrive the resulting schisms in the movement ultimately led to the origins of Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists and the whole culture of American fundamentalism. At about the same time American spiritualism was able to draw on the shamanic traditions of the Indians for part of its inspiration. At a more mundane level, in small-town America well into this century, the revivalist meeting, frequently led by a figure as much a shaman as a preacher, was a common diversion from everyday life. As also was the figure of the 'medicine drummer', immortalised in the stories of Mark Twain and the films of W. C. Fields, whose claims of miraculous powers for his elixirs would only be taken seriously by the gullible, but who could always be relied upon for a good show.

However the great revival of the quest for the supernatural in modern America began as part of the 'sixties counter-culture'; it had several different components. In the nineteenth century US spiritualism, like its British counterpart, had radical overtones, and overlapped with the suffragette and anti-slavery movements, and was seen by some of its adherents as a progressive creed able to give positive and scientific answers to questions formerly wreathed in superstition.(1) They thus saw it as able to give a new synthesis of religion and science, and to unify humanity. By contrast the 'sixties revival of astrology and a wide variety of similar beliefs was part of a revolt against ideas of scientific and material progress.

By the mid 1970's the 'sixties counter-culture had burned itself out. But the end of the

Vietnam War, which had sparked this movement, did not mark a return to American self-confidence. The political right proclaimed that US power was in decline and called for a nuclear arms build-up. This climate, and the new Cold War of the early 'eighties, saw a revival of apocalyptic religious beliefs. The Soviet Union was the Antichrist, and the Cold War was the immediate prelude to an Armageddon from which believers would be spared.

Reading *Not Necessarily the New Age*, a collection of essays on the body of beliefs linked together under the heading 'New Age Consciousness' in modern America, one might think at first that the wheel has come full circle, and the 'sixties counter-culture has been revived. However the similarities are more apparent than real. Sixties fringe beliefs were part of a culture deliberately distanced from the American mainstream; the believers in apocalyptic Christianity (as distinct from those exploiting it for political or financial ends) remain disproportionately elderly and lower income, whereas the believers in the collection of ideas grouped together as 'New Age Consciousness' (henceforth NAC) are in many cases wealthy and successful. 'Channeling' of past lives is conducted at seminars where entrance fees may be \$100 plus. New Agers include college lecturers and creative artists, and glossy, expensive magazines peddle NAC. So what, precisely, is going on?

First of all, the end of the second Cold War seems to have lessened the audience for prophecies of doom, whether from the Bible or Nostradamus, and more benevolent supernatural beliefs have taken their places. Secondly, in a period of apparent economic boom and what Tom Wolfe has called "the Me Decade", NAC represents an incorporation of supernatural beliefs into a culture of self improvement (another recurring theme of US life since the days of Dale Carnegie). Thus, the New Age books of Shirley MacLaine imply that her success as a film star vindicates the beliefs, and more recent articles on Uri Geller offer as proof of his authenticity not scientific tests, but his alleged

"Not Necessarily the New Age" is published by Prometheus Books at £15.95. Prometheus books are distributed in the U.K. by Michael Hutchinson of 10 Crescent View, Loughton, Essex.



It seems
that to
be a
channeller
it is
merely
necessary
to shut
ones
eyes and
announce
a series
of
platitudes
in archaic
language
and a
silly voice



association with major capitalist concerns. These aspects of NAC are well indicated by the book's essay on The Airplane Game, a chain letter type scam, unusual only in involving large sums of money and face to face contact, which has been promoted in the US in the last few years by some NAC figures under such guises as "prosperity consciousness workshop".

The book's publisher and several of its contributors are associated with *Skeptical Enquirer* and CSICOP, so there are several essays which factually examine various New Age claims. Reincarnation is examined in two essays that examine both 'hypnotic regression' evidence for reincarnation and the philosophical arguments - the latter covering some of the same ground as John Harvey's piece on this theme in an earlier *Magnum*.(2)

Philip Klass gives a summary of the contents of his recent book examining UFO abduction claims. The relationship between such claims and the New Age movement seems rather problematic. They have been around for rather longer than NAC, and postulate uncommunicative aliens treating human beings as laboratory rats, rather than benevolent teachers. However some percipients seem to link their abductions with a conversion to New Age type beliefs (examples include John Day of the British Availed case, and Whitley Strieber). The way the two seem to be moving together is indicated by the recent book on abductions by Christine Fiore which includes a personal questionnaire to help discover if the reader is an abductee, and New Age type advice on how to get in touch with ones subconscious to gain further details.

The British parapsychologist Dr Susan Blackmore looks at near-death and out-of-the-body experiences. She suggests that the 'tunnel' commonly reported in these experiences is the result of breakdowns and random activity in the percipient's visual cortex, and she describes some ways in which this hypothesis might be tested. She also refers to claims that near-death experiences represent a reliving of the birth trauma, and states that her research has found no differences in NDE's reported by those who had been born by Caesarian section from those who had undergone a normal birth. As regular readers will remember, this is the opposite of what Dr Alvin Lawson has claimed in the case of abduction reports.(3)

Martin Gardner's contribution looks at the New Age beliefs of Shirley MacLaine, in particular her links with various 'channelers'. It seems that to be a channeller it is necessary merely to shut ones eyes and announce a series of platitudes and fringe science pronouncements in suitably archaic language and a silly voice, while claiming to be a departed spirit. Notably the majority of channelers prefer to summon-up former residents of Atlantis or Lemuria (usually pictured in a manner reminiscent of *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*) rather than people who may have lived at any historical period for which it would be possible to check facts! This is hardly surprising if Shirley MacLaine's claim to be the reincarnation of a jester beheaded for telling improper jokes at the court of Louis XV is a typical example of New Age historical knowledge. (For the record: jesters had long been extinct in European courts by the mid eighteenth century; it is hard to imagine the dissolute Louis XV objecting to improper jokes; monarchic France had by this time a highly developed legal code and its monarchs did not just

execute at will; beheading was a punishment reserved for the aristocracy, everyone else would have been hanged.)

Channeling is an excellent example of the way New Age claims generally seem very resistant to factual analysis. This process can also be seen in the chapter consisting of an interview with Brad Steiger, now it seems a New Age spokesperson, who conspicuously refuses to be pinned down on what, if anything, he actually believes. When challenged on the contents of some of his books blames their content on those fiendish individuals the publishers who, as *Magnum* readers will know from other exchanges, force innocent researchers to put their names to things they do not really believe by the cruel device of paying them money.

However, the vagueness of New Age beliefs is probably part of their appeal. Some of them, such as meditation techniques and various Oriental systems of exercise, probably do give personal benefit to those who practise them. None of them are the sorts of systems that challenge believers to re-assess and totally alter their lives. Instead they are in the nature of accessories whereby a successful but less than fulfilling lifestyle may be spiced up. In this respect NAC seems to fit in well with the ideas of those cultural theorists who argue that we are in an age of 'postmodernism' in which 'grand narratives' (i.e. systems such as Marxism that offer large-scale explanations of the world, and a clear identity to those who accept them) are collapsing and being replaced by a climate in which culture becomes a matter of 'pick'n'mix' in which people determine their identity by choosing different identities from a variety of beliefs and lifestyles.

One aspect that I would like to have seen considered in this book is the interaction between NAC and Christian fundamentalism. One of the main legacies of the American fundamentalist renaissance has been a moral panic against 'satanism', one which thanks to the combined efforts of some clergy, the tabloid press and Roger Cont, seems to be spreading to Britain. New Age beliefs have in many cases run foul of this moral panic, but one suspects that in many cases the gap between the two is not hard and fast. Thus President Reagan has at different times both endorsed belief in the nearness of Armageddon, and sought astrological advice. Similarly, the prophecies of Jean Dixon, like the earlier Edger Cayce, show the influence of both occult beliefs and apocalyptic fundamentalism. Some American sales motivation lecturers have taken on the style and form of the revivalist preacher.

The book's most curious essay is one entitled *New Age Economics* consisting of an ill-tempered rant arguing that NAC is a major enemy of virtuous American free-enterprise capitalism. In fact there is little evidence of any such political overtones to the New Age. Some NAC writers in Britain have linked it to Green politics, but the NAC upsurge in America has produced little sign of a corresponding Green consciousness, while several European nations that have had Green upsurges have little in the way of any rise of New Age beliefs. The way British NAC retains something of its subversive 1960's edge (as evidence by the annual Stonehenge confrontation) seems to be unique. For modern America the shaman is now a yuppie.

.....

LETTERS



Dear Editor

In his reply to my letter (*Magazine* 35), Martin Kottmeyer betrays his continuing penchant for armchair pontificating, by presuming he knows everything about me, with no indication of any curiosity to find out any more. (Peter Rogerson starts out his column doing the same thing.) He also plays the old game of putting words into my mouth that I never said. He credits me with saying that "no other abductee has nightmares". If Mr Kottmeyer will turn to my letter on page 10 of *Magazine* 33 he will see that I merely claimed that "I do not have nightmares", a much milder statement. I do indeed know some abductees who have nightmares. But merely having nightmares is not in itself nearly enough to establish the presence of the boundary-deficit syndrome as described by Kottmeyer. I

would not judge any of the abductees known to me as suffering from this condition. Nor do I interpret the results obtained by Slater, Jacobs or Hopkins as supporting the conclusion that the people they studied necessarily suffered from boundary-deficit syndrome, or were fantasy prone, or anything else of the sort. To the contrary, I should point out that Kenneth Ring has just issued his report on his study of UFO abductees and NDE experiences, in which he concludes that there was no evidence at all that either group consisted of fantasy-prone personalities.

Allen Hynick used to refer to the Blue Book theorem, "It can't be, therefore it isn't". I wonder if we have something similar going on here. Obviously abductions can't be real, therefore all such reports must be fantasies!

In contrast, Mr Kottmeyer's article 'Entirely Unprejudiced' I found to be a very stimulating study with a great deal of interesting material. Nevertheless I suspect that in the final analysis all he has proven is that the perception of any totally unfamiliar phenomenon is necessarily filtered through the distorting effects of cultural predisposition. I have been aware of this problem for a long time, but have never found an adequate solution.

In fact, if I dare to do so, I might speculate that there could be a real chicken-and-egg problem here. Some artists, writers, etc. give me the impression that they are trying to cope with suppressed alien trauma through their work. This could even be the case with some of the films cited by Kottmeyer. One example comes very vividly to my mind. The last on-board encounter that I consciously remember dates back to January 1950, when I was 8 years old. A little over three years later the film *Invasion from Mars* was released, and I went to see it. The detailed appearance of the creatures, etc., was not at all familiar to me, but the theme of implants in my head most certainly was! For a while I was terrified that the film might inspire others to realize that something very similar had happened to me. (Armchair psychoanalysts may make of this whatever they will.)

As for Dennis Stillings' piece, the accusations made against 'Well-Known Abductionist' are indeed disturbing, provided the interpretations put on his behaviour by 'Reliable Source' are really correct. I would like to see WKA defend himself before accepting all of these rumours, however. And again, if I dare do so, I may suggest that WKA might be right about some thing anyway! At face value his warning that abductees should hesitate to have children sounds outrageous. But I know personally of more than one case

where significant damage might have been averted if only some such warning had been received in time. (I do not dare go into details.) Whether the reason be 'genetic experiments done on them by aliens' or something else, I don't know.

I will leave a detailed rebuttal of Stillings' paper up to Eddie Bullard himself, who, I am sure, will come admirably to his own defence. But I would like to raise one further point. Stillings give an example of a sentence, overheard in a bar, about the Super Bowl, and goes into all kinds of details a Martian should be able to deduce from it. I think that Stillings needs to take a look at the literature on the uniqueness of human language and human grammar, and how it differs from anything else that ever evolved upon the Earth. I think it very likely that any truly alien intelligence would find human grammar and language, and probably human motivations and emotions as well, to be totally alien and incomprehensible to themselves! Further, if I dare one more time, I might suggest that much of the bizarre quality of the reported alien behaviour is due to their repeated, but only partially successful, efforts to make sense of what they have found here. Very recently, several of us have independently come to the same conclusions on this point.

Sincerely,
Daryl Collins'

Dear John

I can only conclude that your review of *Fire in the Sky* was written after too cursory an examination. It is an unstructured ramble through the evidence without even coming to a solution. How can it be definitive when it does not solve the case? Why write a case history when no conclusion can be reached? With its bad typing and spelling, its Imperial mensuration, its poor presentation, it hardly maintains the standard set by the first case history (it's not even the same size).

If it was 'meticulously researched' (as you claim) it would mention the type of film used, and the grid reference given for the filming point would not be in the middle of a field! Also it would mention correspondence in *BLUFORA Bulletin* concerning the fuel dumping procedure of the F-111 aircraft.

I am still investigating this incident and my 'definitive' conclusions will be published in due course.

Yours sincerely

Stewart Campbell, Edinburgh

PS: The Arnold report was not due to 'earthlights', the existence of which is very doubtful. It was caused by a *mirage* of nine snow-covered mountain peaks.

As Stewart Campbell is convinced he knows the solution to the UFO mystery he

BOOKS



VALLEE, Jacques. *Confrontations*; a scientist's search for alien contact. Ballantine, New York, 1990. \$19.95.

After the dull rehash of *Dimensions*, Vallee pulls out all the stops with amazing tales of UFO mayhem in South America. The book starts with Vallee's re-examination, fourteen years after the events, of the infamous 1966 Niteroi UFO lead-masks double-deaths case in which two men, members of an occult/UFO cult were found dead, for no apparent cause, on a hilltop outside Rio de Janeiro, with two curious lead masks on the ground nearby. At the time most ufologists simply put this down as one of the odd things that people got up to in South America. You'll remember that in the 'sixties the pages of FSR were filled with this sort of stuff, but that gradually it fell from favour as ufologists' interests moved away from the search for sensation in exotic parts to the perfectly good sensational cases that started happening in rather more accessible parts of the globe like New England and Wiltshire. Vallee

also calls for a re-examination of these cases, and also asks ufologists to re-open the books on such long-forgotten events as the Ubatuba magnesium case. I cannot see today's ufologists following his advice with any enthusiasm.

What Vallee shows in this book is that the strange things did not stop happening in South America just because the ufologists were tied up elsewhere, and a large part of it consists of Vallee's investigations of a series of sensational UFO-related cases in northern Brazil in the early nineteen-eighties, with some excursions into cases he has investigated more locally in California.

The Californian cases are interesting, and show something of the complexity of the UFO experience in America in recent years, which tends to have been overshadowed by the abduction pandemic. However the heart of the book is Vallee's first-hand investigation of a series of UFO events Brazil. Here, in an area of many thousands of square miles south and east

from the mouths of the Amazon there has been, throughout the seventies and eighties, a great number of cases of apparent ufo hostility: hunters out at night in the heavily forested area have been 'zapped' by intense lights from strange flying objects called 'chupas' (described as 'like fridges'). Many of the hunters have subsequently suffered severe physical effects and in some cases have allegedly died as a result of their experience. This is alarming stuff, and it may be very important. It is a pity then that Vallee has chosen to drag in such fraudulent data as the supposed killing of the entire population of a Kenyan village in 1954, and the ridiculous *Norru* comic account of the death of Joao Prestes in 1946.

The accounts of his travels in the remote parts of Brazil are fascinating, but they seem to me to be yet another example of what Peter Rogerson has called the 'Herr Professor' school of UFO research (in Vallee's case perhaps 'Monsieur le Professeur' would be more appropriate) and there seems some evidence that the famous game of 'let's see what we can get the city-slicker to believe' is being played. For one thing, Vallee seems to be unsure of just how remote, naive, innocent and unspoilt the people of this area are - an effect known as the Kinder Syndrome, after the writer of that name who investigated the Billy Meyer case in the remote and primitive backwaters of... well, Switzerland, actually. At one point Vallee informs us that: "These are people who have never heard of *Close Encounters*, or of Steven Spielberg. They fish and hunt because they are too poor to afford the food they need. At night the countryside is

LETTERS: from previous page

obviously feels that no report can be definitive unless it reaches the same conclusion. Less dogmatic commentators feel that a report may be definitive if it comprehensively reviews the situation as known. No doubt Stewart's 'definitive' conclusions will involve something not a million miles away from mirages. Ed.

Dear Sir

As regards to witchcraft in connection with Tomas Harden in my book *Vertical Plane*, and subsequent correspondence in *Magonia*.

We were very well aware of the absence of Crown executions for witchcraft in Henry VIII's England. If the reviewer had read the book closely he would have noted we tried to reassure Tomas that his missing Kathryn could not have been burned. However he later said with some anger, that we were wrong, that an unofficial mob action had resulted in

Kathryn being 'branded' with the King's officers apparently uninterested. I reported what Tomas said.

As before, your comments betray a sad lack of care and precision in quite simple matters.

Yours Sincerely,
Ken Webster, Doddleston, Cheshire.

Dear John

I thought Eddie Bullard's article (in *Magonia* 34) was really excellent. My own views on relevant matters are contained in the 'Psychosocial Hypothesis' entry of my forthcoming *Ufology in the 1980's*, the first volume in the *Encyclopedia of Ufology* series.

Unfortunately, Dennis Stacy's article only looks impressive. In fact it is at best superficial, and at worst wildly misleading - only a slight improvement over Peter Rogerson's goofy speculations about fear of Hispanic immigrants (huh?) in modern

America as the source of current strains of ufological paranoia. Peter, who I am sure is a nice guy, ought to restrict his speculations to things he knows about. Stacy has taken what at most is about half a chapter in a thick book (which, if it were ever written should be entitled *Extraterrestrial Biological Entities, as I call my long Encyclopedia entry on this convoluted matter*) and treated it as the whole story. In the process he has wholly missed its significance, and has even managed to give the impression that real UFO secrets are not involved. In fact the episode does *not* begin with the Bennewitz affair, but begins much earlier in the decade.

Dennis is a friend but in this case he does not know what he is talking about. I hope your readers are not lulled by him into thinking they now know everything they need to know.

Cheers, Jerome Clark, Conby, MN.

perfectly dark. The only high-tension line runs twenty miles to the west." Yet a few pages later on we learn of a UFO that was causing some concern by hovering over the diesel generator for, wait for it... the local TV station! Now it's possible that Brazilian TV consists of nothing but educational documentaries and imported Portuguese fado shows, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if the occasional American soap-opera or science fiction film wasn't shown from time to time. Before I started making patronising statements about what 'these people' may or may not have heard about I would have studied the TV schedules for quite a long time into the past.

Incidentally, northern South America is of course the centre of the international drug trade, many of whose operators fly in choppers - or do I mean chupas? It would be useful to them if witnesses to their flights became so scared that they did not care to investigate too closely. Much of the injury caused to the unfortunate hunters consists of skin rashes and scars of the type which could be caused by aerial spraying of chemicals. The sort of people who might be doing that over tropical rain forests wouldn't want their activities investigated too closely either. Vallee informs us that the Brazilian Army has been seen nosing around the area. I'm not surprised.

In his final chapters Vallee seems to be moving into Gordon Creighton's territory: the UFOs he 'concludes' (as much as any of Vallee's work has a conclusion) are a force that have been sharing our planet with us for millennia. A force that uses and manipulates mankind in a terrifying manner. I wouldn't disagree with that, except that Vallee seems to think that this force is something other than our own strange and terrifying psyche. In this book he has shown no evidence that this is the case, although he has presented us with a highly readable, if sometimes flawed, account of a great deal of first-hand investigation. As someone said a long time ago: "From the depths of my armchair I recommend this book."

John Rimmer

FIORE, Edith. *Abductions; encounters with extraterrestrials*. Sidgwick Jackson, 1989. £13.95.

Edith Fiore has previously written books on hypnotic regressions to past lives and exorcism, and in this work she demonstrates the extremes which a literal belief in hypnotic regression and the infallibility of the memories uncovered thereby, combined with a naive belief in extraterrestrials, can take even educated people. What is presented are reports of hypnotic regression sessions with seventeen anonymous abductees. Their motives for undergoing such a procedure seem to range from simple curiosity and megalomania, through to major trauma and beyond. The accounts contain both standard and non-standard motifs, and by the time you get to Dan Dan the Star Trooper man, you know it's all fantasy and there's *absolutely nothing* Fiore wouldn't take at face value.

A final chapter offers "you can discover your own close encounter" by means of a questionnaire. In suggesting to the anxious and marginalised that they may have been used as a lab rat by the inhabitants of *Magonia*-towns-where, she is surely being totally irresponsible, adding to their terror and dissociations.

Peter Rogerson

ZOLLSCHAN, G K; SCHUMAKER, J F and WALSH, G F (Eds.) *Exploring the Paranormal; perspectives in belief and experience*. Prism Press, 1989. £7.95.

This Australian symposium covers a wider range of articles than some other books in the same vein, going into both sociological and mystical realms. Radical believers and radical sceptics and various points in between all contribute. Illustrative of this wide range are W J Bainbridge's study of the correlation between geographical mobility and belief in the paranormal, and James Stewart's study of a bigfoot wave in a native American community in North Dakota.

Perhaps of particular interest to *Magonia* readers are Gary Groth-Movnat's article on 'Paranormal Phenomena and the

Near Death Experience', and Peter Nelson's survey of mystical, visionary and remote perception experiences. Though by no means a light read, this book contains much of value and can be recommended, especially in view of its most reasonable price.

Peter Rogerson

GODDARD, Jimmy. *The Inhabited Solar System. The Star Fellowship* (25 Albert Rd, Addlestone, Surrey, KT15 2PX) 1990.

In the same way that old but much-loved portions of our towns and cities are declared Conservation Areas, or rare birds and toads are protected by being listed as Endangered Species, there is I think scope for outdated UFO theories and ufologists to be declared Sites of Historical Ufological Interest. If such a scheme should be started this slim volume should surely be put forward for the honour of first nomination.

It's a delight to read; a welcome refuge from the brashness of post-modern ufology with its abductions, genetic experiments and overwhelming disturbing ambiguity. We get no ambiguity from Jimmy Goddard. The planets of our solar system are inhabited, evidence to the contrary has been manufactured by NASA, through doctoring the photographs from space probes. Even that might not be necessary - recent photographs of Earth which Jimmy examined showed no signs of human habitation, even though the part of North Africa depicted included several large towns. It should not detract from this observation when we learn that Jimmy studied these photos in a magazine in an optician's waiting room! The booklet concludes with a glossary of the space language and a song in the same tongue - although the words of this - "...youngi naga yara abba sam..." make as much sense as most songs written in the last twenty years or so (careful, Rimmer, age showing). There is no price noted on the review copy I was sent, but it really is priceless. I recommend it to all *Magonia* readers. Send a pound, that seems about right.

John Rimmer

GOOD, Timothy. (Ed.) *UFO Report 1989*. Sidgwick and Jackson, 1989. £7.99.

This is a very unbalanced presentation of current ufology with a strong bias towards what might be called the 'Gee-whizz' school. It is also enmeshed into the sectarian politics of ufology to an extent which must bewilder outsiders. Thus we have the Birdsall Brothers rubbish just about everyone else in their review of vague LITS. In his review of crop circles, George Wingfield contents himself with just rubbishing Terrence Meaden.

Much of the rest is just pedestrian. Cynthia Hind makes her usual patronising

remarks about the blacks, contributors from the USSR and the American-Chinese community provide clippings. Len Stringfield goes even further over the top and Donald Ware summarises Gulf Breeze without reproducing even one of the notorious photos - no doubt he realised they would be fatal to his case!

It is perhaps not too cynical to wonder if Ralph Noyes' defence of the Halt Memorandum is not written at least slightly tongue in cheek. As I read it the memorandum provides strong evidence for the misidentification of a distant bright light (see Hendry for other examples). Less

cynical souls may well find themselves speculating along conspiratorial lines, as was perhaps the intent.

The book list at the end of this volume is a joke, and the list of UK journals simply ignores every journal of importance (Fortean Times, Northern UFO News, UFO Brigantia, UFO Times and, of course, *Magonia*). While of interest to ufologists and followers of UFO group politics, it does not provide an even remotely acceptable treatment of the subject for the general public and in many places is mischievously misleading.

Peter Rogerson

JONES, Kelvin L. *Conan Doyle and the Spirits*. Aquarian Press, 1989. £8.99.

This biography concentrates on Doyle's involvement with the spiritualist movement, and his fantastic literature. Though in the early part of the book some attempt is made to discuss his complex character, it trails off into a bare narrative of events. It is clear that Doyle, a lapsed Catholic, like many of his generation sought a rational religion which would exorcise the hell-fire visions of his youth, and the emptiness of his early adult rationalism. Spiritualist perhaps also provided a mechanism for the domestication of the psychic terrors which surface in much of his horror fiction, and which perhaps drove his father to alcohol and the lunatic asylum. Was it against such terrors that Doyle launched his hero Holmes, the beacon of passionless reason and logic in a fog of savage emotions and nameless passions.

Ultimately it was less Doyle's commitment to survivalism which made him seem foolish, than his incapacity to accept the high degree of fraud in the subject, and his inability to accept the possibility that his own judgement might be flawed. Peter Rogerston

COHEN, Daniel. *Encyclopedia of Monsters*. Michael O'Mara, 1989. £11.95

COHEN, Daniel. *Encyclopedia of Ghosts*. Michael O'Mara, 1989. 11.95.

RADFORD, Ken. *Fire Burn*. Michael O'Mara, 1989. £11.95.

The two Cohen book are popularly written, and give brief entries for a wide range of phenomena within the areas they cover. Most of the major cases are here and some of the lesser-known ones too (although we are sorry to see no note of

the Brentford Griffin). A representative range of UFO entities are dealt with in the *Monsters* books. The entries are arranged alphabetically in various rather arbitrary categories - *Humanoids*, *Land Monsters*, *Phantoms*, *Sea Monsters*, etc. The accounts are brief, but quite comprehensive and not uncritical. Both books are well illustrated, but would benefit for the addition of 'further reading' notes for each entry, rather than a few pages of a very generalized 'Annotated Bibliography' at the end. Little here really for the experienced Fortean, but a useful primer for the general reader (if such a creature exists; they seem more elusive than any bigfoot).

The Radford book is a companion volume to the two above, but goes perhaps a little too far in dramatising the famous witchcraft cases it covers, reconstructing dialogue and descriptions. However, the basic facts seem accurate enough, and again, the book is well illustrated (some of the woodcuts have been used in this issue of *Magonia* to illustrate Manfred Cassirer's article. Again, not a book for the serious student, but a good read for our elusive general reader.

John Rimmer.

CLARKE, Jeremy. *Macrotrivia vs. Skull*. Fourth Estate, 1989. Pbk., £4.95.

What is as dangerous as shark infested jelly and has a predilection for drinking gallons of cola and eating mountains of candy-bars? No, not Billy Bunter let loose in the tuck shop but the alien (from outer space) who is the homicidal hero of this novel.

Having such a central character allows you to show up all the faults and idiocies of our Western civilization. This is not a particularly original means of attack

or criticism, indeed the whole book is derived from such sources as pulp detective fiction, science fiction B-movies; the writings of Thomas Pynchon, Robert Anton Wilson and Henry Miller; TV quiz games and soap-operas; advertising copy lines; mixed with a dollop of *Psycho*, *Explorers*, *The man Who Fell to Earth*, combined with the entrails of Ronald Macdonald.

Having said that, Jeremy Clarke stirs all the ingredients together to reveal the half-baked notions of men, mice and visiting extraterrestrials. The corporate battles for the control of our bank accounts and minds with any old junk disguised as food for the enrichment of our material or mental enlightenment is excellently portrayed. Significantly the 'alien' isn't a thinly disguised commie outsider, as lovingly depicted in such low-budget epics as *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* (i object, *I Married a Monster from Outer Space* was a well-made film which actually projected a rather sympathetic view of the aliens and ended up questioning human species-chauvinism - Ed.) or *Red Planet Mars* (Give you that one - Ed.). Instead he becomes more like us by embracing the junk-culture ethic with open tentacles (sorry, I mean arms, unless you live near a nuclear power station). This is an alien who is frightening because he is like us: there is nothing he can do to upset the American way of life, because Mom's apple pie is rotten to the core. If anything, the alien has been corrupted by us. For his *Star Trek* is a pile of crap; the blonde gods loved by Adamski have reincarnated as motel room cockroaches. the fast food biz will conquer the universe!

Nigel Watson

PORTRAITS OF ALIEN ENCOUNTERS

BY NIGEL WATSON

Flying saucers and encounters with beings from 'outer space' have intrigued and puzzled everyone for the past forty years. This book doesn't promise a solution to the enigma but it does examine in detail strange and frightening close encounter stories. These include sightings of a 12-foot-tall green robot, men in black, attractive female UFO pilots, lights in the sky, flying saucers, plus accounts of telepathic messages, strange dreams, sinister rays, alien brain operations, ghosts, poltergeists and prophecies. The main value of *Portraits of Alien Encounters* is that it shows how witnesses, to simple lights in the sky, can become entangled in complex series of visions, sightings and encounters. All these incidents, which occurred in the Bradford, Sheffield, Leeds, Hull, areas of Northern England, were investigated by Nigel Watson long before the 'revelations' contained in *Communion* and *Intruders*. Most of this material has never been published before. For just £10.00 this invaluable reference and insight into the flying saucer enigma can be yours!

Return to: Nigel Watson, 52A Lascotts Road, Wood Green, London, N22 4JN, England.